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HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Forty-second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1085th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 23 July 1991, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. POCAR

later: Mr. DIMITRIJEVIC

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND OTHER MATTERS (agenda item 2) (continued)

1. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to consider the paper prepared by the Working Group for the World Conference on Human Rights (M/CCPR/91/32). He gave the floor to the Chairman-Rapporteur of the Working Group, Mr. Aguilar Urbina, to introduce the document.

2. Mr. AGUILAR URBINA (Chairman-Rapporteur of the Working Group) said that the Working Group had been entrusted with the task of drawing up a set of recommendations to be submitted by the Committee for the consideration of the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference on Human Rights to be held in 1993. It had drafted a paper which consisted of an introduction and several sections concerning, respectively, the assessment of progress made in the field of human rights, the relation between development and the enjoyment of human rights, evaluation of the effectiveness of and examination of ways and means to improve United Nations performance in the field of human rights, recommendations of the Human Rights Committee and, lastly, recommendations for ensuring the necessary financial and other resources. The Working Group hoped that the document would serve as the basis for an open and frank discussion within the Committee; it was only a working paper, and members' criticisms and suggestions would be welcome.

3. The CHAIRMAN thanked the Chairman-Rapporteur and the Working Group for the paper they had prepared (M/CCPR/91/32) and invited the Committee to begin with a general exchange of views and then to consider the text paragraph by paragraph.

4. Mr. SADI endorsed the suggestion to hold a preliminary exchange of views, which would help to establish a general framework for the discussion. In that connection, he wondered whether the Committee's recommendations should relate to all United Nations activities in the field of human rights or whether they should focus specifically on the Committee's own activities. In his view, the Committee should confine itself to what it knew best, in other words, its own work. That was surely the best contribution it could make to the Conference. In any event, the Committee would have to adopt a position on that question.

5. Mr. EL SHAFEI said that Mr. Sadi's point was well taken. For his part, he saw no reason why the Committee should not refer to matters other than those which were of direct concern to it or fell within the scope of its mandate.

6. He thanked the Working Group for the excellent and very comprehensive paper it had drafted. With regard to the recommendations contained in the document, he was particularly interested by the idea that the Security Council should seek a more active involvement in human rights protection worldwide. International peace and security were not threatened by military action alone; other factors, such as grave violations of fundamental human rights, also constituted a danger in that respect. The Charter of the United Nations did not contain any provision that would prevent the Secretary-General or States parties from requesting the Security Council to meet and examine situations

arising as a result of massive violations of human rights. It had to be recognized that such situations engendered tensions or even conflicts, both internal and external. In his view, it was important for the Committee to emphasize that point. Furthermore, as the working paper stated, a new definition of security had to be envisaged.

7. The idea of a high commissioner for human rights had of course been under discussion for many years, but the proposal to create two international judiciary organs was a new one. In his view, however, regional arrangements were a more appropriate framework for dealing with problems in that field. Rather than establishing international courts, it would be better to provide States parties and private individuals with the possibility of bringing cases before regional bodies. There was an obvious need to set up more mechanisms of that kind. By contrast, the current international situation was generally not conducive to the establishment of international bodies whose decisions would be enforceable.

8. The proposal to make the Committee's views regarding communications binding was not likely to receive universal support. Experience showed that most of the States parties which had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Covenant held the Committee's views in high esteem and often took the measures it advocated, especially those in the legislative sphere (amendments to laws and so forth). It would thus be far wiser, in his opinion, to seek to develop the dialogue between States parties and the Committee rather than try to make the Committee's decisions binding, a step which would moreover necessitate amendments both to the Optional Protocol and to the Covenant itself.

9. He fully endorsed the assessment of the global human rights situation to be found in the introductory part of the working paper. The fact that a growing number of countries were ratifying the various human rights instruments, including the Optional Protocol to the Covenant, was to be welcomed, but a proliferation of bodies for the protection of human rights could ultimately have negative repercussions. Some countries, for example, were already finding it difficult to fulfil their reporting obligations and the World Conference should give careful consideration to that matter. Generally speaking, he felt that there were enough international human rights instruments and that it would perhaps be inadvisable to prepare any new ones for the moment. He would therefore suggest a kind of moratorium on the elaboration of international instruments in the human rights field.

10. Mr. AGUILAR URBINA (Chairman-Rapporteur of the Working Group) said that he wished to underline the importance of Mr. Sadi's comment on the scope of the recommendations to be made by the Committee and the need for it to adopt a clear position in that regard. As the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights, Mr. Martenson, had recently said, United Nations bodies should make proposals for the Conference without fear of overlapping or mutual contradiction. The important thing was to keep an open mind and show imagination with regard to the measures that might be adopted.

11. Miss CHANET congratulated the Working Group on the remarkable paper it had prepared. She was pleased to note, among other things, that it reflected many of the ideas she had suggested.

12. In her view, the Committee should not confine itself only to matters within its mandate. The Committee's competence and experience provided a basis from which it could proceed to formulate conclusions applicable to the human rights field as a whole. Moreover, a document which spoke only of matters directly within the Committee's purview would surely be of little interest to anyone outside the Committee itself. It was important to make the Committee's expertise widely known and the document it adopted should be exhaustive.

13. So far as the Working Group's draft was concerned, she first wished to make a few formal criticisms. Some passages were too long and needed to be shortened and the presentation could be revised. In her view, the text could be divided into two main parts, the first summing up action taken to promote human rights over the past decades and formulating proposals, and the second containing the Committee's various recommendations. As to substance, she had serious reservations on two points, namely the link between development and human rights and the principle of non-intervention. The Charter of the United Nations did not in fact authorize intervention of any kind; on the contrary, it explicitly set forth the principle of non-intervention in paragraph 7 of its Article 2. In adopting resolution 688 (1991), the members of the Security Council had found a way not to depart from that principle, and their action had been confined strictly to the humanitarian sphere. The procedure adopted in that particular case was not, in her view, transposable - even mutatis mutandis - to the field of human rights. Furthermore, it was not for the Committee to discuss what the Security Council ought to do. On the other hand, it was certainly part of the Committee's role to try to detect any gaps that existed in the system of human rights protection. The Committee should suggest new approaches, for example by recommending that special powers be conferred on the Secretary-General, or possibly on a high commissioner, in urgent situations. But in all those matters it should exercise the greatest circumspection so as not to exceed the limits of its competence.

14. Mr. HERNDL thanked the Working Group for the excellent paper it had submitted to the Committee as a concrete basis for discussion. Mr. Sadi was right to have raised the question of the scope of the Committee's recommendations. He fully agreed with Miss Chanet that the Committee should not confine itself exclusively to matters within its mandate but should go beyond the relatively narrow parameters of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It would be regrettable if the Committee failed to make its vast experience available to the Conference.

15. With regard to the working paper, he agreed that its formal presentation should be amended, in particular by shortening the introductory part. He would return to the question of the recommendations when the Committee examined them in detail, but generally speaking they seemed to him to be satisfactory. Emphasis must be placed on the future of human rights and action to improve their protection. As the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights, Mr. Martenson, had rightly said in his statement at the opening of the Committee's current session, the object of the Conference was not to redefine international human rights standards or to examine the situations in particular countries. The important thing was to improve the methods actually used to ensure the protection of human rights, to provide additional resources

for that purpose and to see to it that international standards in that field were properly applied. In his view, the working paper represented a useful contribution towards those ends.

16. Mr. MAVROMMATIS warmly thanked the Working Group and its Chairman-Rapporteur for the excellent paper they had presented to the Committee setting out all the issues that the Conference would have to discuss. He had been associated from the start, in various ways, with the idea of convening a World Conference on Human Rights and had therefore had occasion to ask himself what should be the purposes as well as the limits of such an undertaking. The Conference would, of course, provide an opportunity for taking stock, but the interest of its conclusions would be limited in time. He would return later to the various recommendations in the Working Group's paper, but wished now to confine himself to general considerations. To his mind, it was extremely important for the Committee to have a clear idea of what objectives the Conference should pursue and what it wanted the Conference to be. The Committee could contribute to the meeting's success in two ways, by its suggestions and by the statement its Chairman would deliver at the Conference.

17. There was no need to recall that the Committee's objective was to improve the world human rights situation and the machinery for the protection of human rights. Non-governmental organizations, the Commission on Human Rights and many other bodies would be making proposals to the Conference. The Committee also had to define what objectives it thought the Conference should pursue, and to make a contribution along those lines. The document it presented at the Conference would have to reflect the position it had adopted in that regard. Thus, the Committee's first and most urgent task was to define those objectives.

18. Mr. SADI thanked the Working Group for the very important paper it had prepared. In general, the recommendations in the paper were excellent, although they did not focus enough on matters of direct concern to the Committee. The paper said little about steps that might be taken in order to improve the Committee's work and make it more effective. It should not be forgotten that at the Conference the Committee would have to put forward suggestions on ways and means of enhancing its own performance. He therefore regretted that the paper gave insufficient attention to the activities of the Human Rights Committee.

19. The Working Group rightly noted that less than 1 per cent of the budget of the United Nations was invested in human rights activities. That point was an important one, in his view, and deserved to be given consideration. He would also like emphasis to be placed on the question of the appointment of a high commissioner for human rights and the establishment of an international court for human rights. The latter proposal was all the more important as the Committee might well be called upon eventually to become such an international court; it was therefore particularly advisable for it to concentrate on that question. Another idea of capital importance was that of more active involvement by the Security Council in human rights protection worldwide. He was in favour of the Council's powers being extended so that it could act in the event of gross and systematic violations of human rights. The Committee's paper should attach greater importance to that question.

20. In addition, he wondered why the Centre for Human Rights, unlike many other United Nations bodies or specialized agencies such as UNDP and UNESCO, did not have offices in several parts of the world. The presence of the Centre should, in his view, be expanded worldwide.

21. On page 20 of the paper it was affirmed that States should be made aware "that the ratification of human rights covenants does not entail a loss of sovereignty". He could not agree with that statement. Whenever a State ratified a human rights instrument it did in effect lose part of its sovereignty. But that was entirely normal and should be welcomed. He found it difficult to understand why the Committee seemed to want to assure States of the contrary.

22. The question, raised in particular by Miss Chanet, of the relationship between development and human rights was another point that should be brought out more clearly in the document. His own view was that the existence of two Covenants, one dealing with economic, social and cultural rights and the other with civil and political rights, was attributable to the fact that their authors - and consequently also the countries which had been at the origin of those initiatives - had felt that the achievement of economic development, and hence the possibility of enjoyment of economic rights, would take some time; on the other hand, they had obviously felt that nothing could justify violations of civil and political rights, whatever the level of development of the country concerned. Accordingly, they had thought that a distinction should be made between the two different types of rights by creating two separate Covenants.

23. Mr. MYULLERSON thanked the Working Group for the special effort it had made in preparing the paper before the Committee. He agreed with Miss Chanet, however, that it would benefit from some restructuring. In particular, greater emphasis should be placed on the Committee's recommendations on important issues such as the principle of non-intervention. The relationship between development and the enjoyment of human rights and the role of the Security Council in the human rights field were also issues of the greatest importance. That being said, he thought that the paper on the whole provided a useful basis for discussion in the Committee.

24. Mr. NDIAYE also thanked the Working Group for its efforts in providing the Committee with a sound basis for discussion. To his mind, however, the paper made certain basic assumptions that were not necessarily justified. The Committee should not, for example, be so impressed by the efficiency of the Security Council in the Gulf crisis as to think that the Council could play a decisive role in the future of human rights throughout the world. Given its composition, method of operating and tendency to approach problems from the viewpoint of the interests of the permanent members, the Security Council was unlikely to be able to act as a central organ permanently required to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights. The Committee should ponder that delicate issue and not rely on a priori assumptions.

25. The idea of an office of United Nations high commissioner for human rights seemed justified, but it was first necessary to decide what powers would actually be conferred on such a body.

26. Referring to paragraph 1 on page 6 of the working paper, he thought that States knew and understood enough about the international human rights instruments and how they were applied by United Nations bodies; rather, it was the general public that was ignorant on those subjects. It was important not to offer that far too easy excuse for the violations committed by some States. All the same, third-world countries could benefit from technical assistance in the preparation of their periodic reports or in their public information activities. On the latter point, information campaigns were certainly necessary but the first priority was to determine what needed to be done; experience in African countries had often shown, for example, that the publication of works of an academic nature had little impact on the general public. Lastly, the working paper would benefit from restructuring and for that purpose the Committee could consider it paragraph by paragraph to decide what passages should be retained, amended or replaced.

27. Mr. WAKO said that the World Conference on Human Rights would undoubtedly provide an exceptional opportunity for raising awareness of the importance of human rights to each and every individual throughout the world. He supported the proposals for the establishment of a United Nations high commissioner for human rights, an international court for human rights and a human rights institute.

28. The paper drawn up by the Working Group was excellent, although some changes were called for. For his part, he would like some reference to be made in particular to the Committee's observations regarding the difficulties experienced by States parties in implementing the Covenant. It had become apparent that those difficulties were due in large part to the lack of resources of States parties, which did not always possess the necessary means of inquiry, a fact which could in turn have a whole series of harmful implications for the administration of justice. That situation might, for example, lead some States parties to infringe rights set forth in the Covenant, particularly those in articles 4, 6, 7, 9 and 14. In addition, the Governments of States parties which lacked technical, human, material and financial resources often had difficulty in preparing their periodic reports. The part of the United Nations budget devoted to human rights activities and the programme of advisory services should therefore be increased.

29. Lastly, further attention should be given to the relations between the various United Nations human rights bodies and to cooperation with the regional commissions and other organs with similar responsibilities.

30. Mr. PRADO VALLEJO thanked the Working Group for its careful drafting of the Committee's potential contribution to the Conference. In his view, the Conference would represent substantial progress towards universal respect of human rights, but much would still have to be done after that important meeting to improve the machinery for the promotion and protection of human rights.

31. He considered that the Committee's paper should be divided into two parts, one devoted to general ideas and the other to specific measures proposed by the Committee on the basis of its experience with a view to helping other bodies and the international community to work more effectively to ensure respect for human rights.

32. In the first part of the paper, the Committee could state that it favoured the establishment of a high commissioner for human rights and an international human rights institute. As to the role of the Security Council, it should be emphasized that the Council was an eminently political body governed in large part by the interests of the permanent members, as its decisions in the Gulf crisis had shown. However, the Security Council also had responsibilities under the Charter with regard to the respect of human rights, and it should play a more active role in that area than it had done in the past. Furthermore, he thought that action by States for the protection of human rights was by no means contrary to the principle of non-intervention. In that connection, it was worth recalling the agreement signed by the Andean countries, which had recognized action to protect human rights as a standard for conduct.

33. Among the general ideas to be formulated in the paper, the Committee might also stress the indivisibility of civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights. In addition, it could recall that the rights to peace, development and a healthy environment had all been recognized by the General Assembly and that respect for human rights in large part depended on the level of economic development, particularly in the poorest countries.

34. The second part of the paper, as he envisaged it, would concern the Committee's activities in fulfilling its duties under the Covenant, and would put forward several ideas. First, it should stress the need for mechanisms enabling better implementation of the rights set forth in the Covenant. For example, States should be prevailed upon to undertake to apply the Committee's decisions, and to do so effectively. In addition, ways and means should be found to increase the number of ratifications of the Covenant and the Optional Protocol so as to give those instruments a universal character.

35. Furthermore, concrete initiatives should be taken to ensure that States parties improved the presentation of their reports by following the Committee's guidelines. As to communications, the Committee must be able to examine them more quickly and meet the necessary deadlines. It might therefore be useful to devote one session each year to communications, which were piling up as the Committee could not deal with them in the appointed time. The members of the Committee must be able to prepare themselves beforehand for the consideration of communications and therefore should receive the necessary documents well in advance.

36. In order to be more efficient, the Committee needed to be well supported. For that purpose, the Centre for Human Rights should be strengthened and given additional material and human resources. States parties also needed technical assistance, not only in preparing the reports expected from them but also for providing education in human rights. In some countries there were many population groups which did not have the least idea of what human rights were. For that reason, too, the Centre for Human Rights needed strengthening.

37. Lastly, in order to achieve closer coordination, there was a need to improve the relations between the Committee and other bodies concerned with the protection and promotion of human rights, particularly in the region with

which he was most familiar. He referred, for example, to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights based in Costa Rica.

38. Mr. Dimitrijevic took the Chair.

39. Mr. SERRANO CALDERA said that the working paper under consideration formed an excellent basis for discussion. For his own part, he attached particular importance to reviewing the operation of the United Nations human rights bodies and improving coordination between the various organs having competence in that field, as well as providing the Centre for Human Rights with additional financial resources. He also favoured the idea of establishing an office of high commissioner for human rights, an international court for human rights and an international penal court.

40. Concerning the relationship between human rights and State sovereignty, a question raised by Mr. Sadi and Mr. Prado Vallejo in regard to the connection between human rights and non-intervention, he agreed with his colleagues that the world today was in the process of defining, as it were, a common platform whose planks were the existing human rights instruments. Subscribing to one of those instruments meant a voluntary and deliberate limitation, on the part of a State, of its possibility of invoking the rights deriving from its sovereignty. Indeed, the very concept of sovereignty was no longer the same as at the time of the emergence of the nation State, when it had among other things implied absolute right over a territory, absolute jurisdiction over its population, and frontiers between countries delimited in an absolute manner.

41. Since then the world had become internationalized, notably as a result of the tremendous development of communications, information processing and data transmission techniques. As was often said, it had become a global village because an event occurring in one part of the world had repercussions everywhere else within minutes, to such an extent that frontiers themselves had in a sense lost their hermetic nature. The concepts underlying the legal criteria of sovereignty should therefore be reviewed in the light of the idea of a voluntary and deliberate limitation of sovereignty accepted by States in the name of international coexistence. The concept of sovereignty was thus evolving with the international instruments, a process that went in step with the evolution of the whole of international law and of the world itself.

42. Turning to the role of the Security Council in connection with human rights violations, he felt that there was a need to find mechanisms capable of halting or curbing massive violations such as those which amounted to genocide. With the disappearance of the bipolarity that had long characterized international life, the Security Council was no longer called upon to play the role of counterweight to restore a balance, where necessary, between the two spheres of influence which had dominated the international scene. That did not mean, however, that the Council must seek another role for itself at any price and that it must set itself up as a judge empowered to decide where human rights were being violated and where they were not. The Council was a political organ responsible for the maintenance of peace, and should remain such, even if experience had revealed its limitations in that respect.

43. The recommendations in the working paper were entirely pertinent. For his part, he considered that the World Conference should deal with two sets of issues. The first, as referred to in the working paper, concerned existing mechanisms and current violations in the field of human rights, as well as the failings of the system employed to curb such phenomena. The question in that regard was how to improve the system so that it could respond better to the challenges it faced.

44. The second set of issues which should in his view be taken up by the World Conference, and which did not seem to have been considered in the working paper or indeed in the mandate of the Conference, concerned the future. What would human rights be in the twenty-first century? The types of violations occurring today would undoubtedly still be taking place. But thought should also be given to the new human rights violations which came into being with technological progress and which could already be observed in the most advanced societies, where the phenomenon known as "reification" was rampant. A new world would see the birth of new problems which had to be investigated, as the authors of some recent books had already done. Even if those problems were as yet unknown in some countries, it was important to learn how to interpret the warning signals because they concerned human rights and the relationship between technology and civilization. What would the Conference have to say about human rights in the coming era of revolution?

45. Mr. NDIAYE, in a final comment on the Working Group's recommendations, said it was unreasonable to propose the establishment of a human rights institute when institutions of that kind already existed at the regional level. Available structures should be utilized in a judicious manner, and duplication of effort should be avoided. Thus it would be preferable to improve coordination of activities among the various existing institutes and to encourage or even promote the establishment of institutes in regions where there were none.

46. The CHAIRMAN invited Mr. Aguilar Urbina, as Chairman of the Working Group which had prepared the paper under consideration, to sum up the exchange of views that had just taken place. The Committee could then decide on the form of the document to be submitted to the Preparatory Committee for the Conference.

47. Mr. AGUILAR URBINA reviewed the various comments made on the contents of the working paper and the new ideas expressed. The most important aspect of the recommendations for the World Conference in his view concerned the future system of protection of human rights, covering not only the 10 years ahead but the century starting with the year 2000. That point had been developed by Mr. Serrano Caldera in connection with the question of State sovereignty raised by Mr. Sadi.

48. The question of methods and mechanisms had been referred to more particularly by Mr. Prado Vallejo, who was anxious that the Covenant should achieve universal status. Relations between the Committee and other bodies and institutions dealing with human rights had also been discussed. In that connection, he wished to cite an example of possible forms of collaboration between the Committee and its expert members and the regional institutions dealing with human rights. In September 1991, Miss Chanet would be

participating in a seminar organized by the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights in Haiti; while that initiative had resulted from personal contacts, it was nevertheless true that better use should be made, on a reciprocal basis, of the resources at the disposal of the various bodies.

49. Lastly, observations and comments had been made on the role of the Security Council, which could perhaps be redefined within the framework of the World Conference on Human Rights, and in respect of which there had been some differences of opinion.

50. Mr. Pocar resumed the Chair.

51. Mr. MAVROMMATIS said he did not think that the Preparatory Committee for the Conference had been mandated to examine closely such in-depth documents as the paper submitted by the Working Group. At the current stage, the Committee should discuss only what the Preparatory Committee expected from it and the other treaty bodies. The Preparatory Committee, which was due to meet for one week only, would make recommendations on organizational arrangements for the Conference, such as date and venue, duration, participation, working languages and possibly rules of procedure. So far as documentation was concerned, it would no doubt provide a very general guide to the type of documents that should be submitted. If the Human Rights Committee submitted the Working Group's paper to the Preparatory Committee, it would have to resubmit it at the Conference, always assuming that it was invited to participate. Its first concern should be to obtain authorization to participate in the Conference. Once the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee were approved by the General Assembly, it would have ample time to decide on the presentation and content of its contribution to the Conference. For the time being, it should proceed on the basis of the recommendations of the Commission on Human Rights as set out in the annex to its resolution 1991/30.

52. The CHAIRMAN agreed that the Committee did not have to study its possible contribution in detail at the current stage. However, the recommendations of the Commission on Human Rights were themselves quite detailed. One of the Preparatory Committee's essential tasks would be to draw up an agenda for the Conference; the Working Group's paper would be extremely useful in that respect, as the Human Rights Committee could extract several ideas from it and propose them either as separate agenda items or as sub-items. For example, the idea of establishing a human rights institute or a high commissioner for human rights could be related to the recommendation of the Commission on Human Rights concerning ways and means of improving the implementation of existing human rights standards and instruments or to the recommendation on ways and means of promoting a universal culture of human rights.

53. Mr. HOUSHMAND (Representative of the Secretary-General) recalled that the mandate given to the Preparatory Committee by the General Assembly in operative paragraph 3 of resolution 45/155 was to make proposals regarding the agenda, date, duration, venue of and participation in the Conference, as well as preparatory meetings and activities at the international, regional and national levels in 1992, and on desirable studies and other documentation. It seemed therefore that the Working Group's paper, valuable as it was,

went beyond that mandate and was rather in the nature of a contribution to the Conference itself. For the time being, the Human Rights Committee would have to decide on recommendations concerning the participation of its Chairman in the Preparatory Committee. It could, for example, consider what points the Chairman might make in his statement and how it could indicate what issues it and other treaty bodies considered most important, so that the Preparatory Committee could take due account of them. The Committee could also, if it wished, indicate in broad outline what kind of study it was proposing to submit, on its own behalf and possibly on behalf of other treaty bodies, as a contribution to the Conference. At the latest meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies, it had been considered desirable to adopt a uniform approach to the World Conference on Human Rights. The Preparatory Committee would meet twice more in 1992; therefore, the Human Rights Committee should now focus attention on its participation in those meetings and on points to be taken into consideration in the Conference agenda.

54. Mr. ANDO, speaking as a member of the Working Group, said that the Group had proceeded on the basis that the Committee would be represented in the Preparatory Committee and had not thought that it should concern itself with questions such as the date, venue of and participation in the Conference. It had felt that it should submit as many ideas as possible to the Chairman of the Human Rights Committee so that he might put them forward when the Conference agenda was drawn up. It was in that spirit that the members of the Committee should consider the working paper.

55. The CHAIRMAN stressed that, in its recommendations, the Commission on Human Rights referred to the need to strengthen cooperation through regional meetings and activities and the encouragement of regional institutions. The Human Rights Committee might, for example, propose to the Preparatory Committee the holding of a regional technical seminar, as the World Conference on Human Rights would have a political and diplomatic character and would not be an appropriate place for discussing specific and technical legal matters. The Conference would greatly benefit from sound legal documentation submitted by the treaty bodies, or by regional and technical bodies in general. The Human Rights Committee could therefore suggest that the Preparatory Committee should envisage preliminary joint activities leading to the preparation of specific documents.

56. Mr. PRADO VALLEJO said that the information just furnished by the representative of the Secretary-General completely altered the nature of the discussion. The Committee had thus far been considering the merits of a paper which, as it now learned, should be regarded as the Committee's contribution to the Conference rather than as its contribution to the Preparatory Committee. Since the Committee was now being asked to think about much more specific matters, it might be preferable to request the Working Group, with the assistance of the secretariat, to prepare a very short document containing suggestions for the Conference agenda.

57. The CHAIRMAN said that, in his view, the discussion just held in the Committee had been far from useless. The working paper advanced a large number of ideas which could facilitate the choice of topics for inclusion in the Conference agenda.

58. Mr. PRADO VALLEJO said that he wished to stress the usefulness of the paper submitted by the Working Group, which he commended for its remarkable contribution. Clearly, however, the most urgent task now was no longer to consider the substance of that document but to draw up an outline plan for submission to the Preparatory Committee. He therefore reiterated his suggestion that the Working Group should be requested to present such a plan at a later meeting.

59. Mr. MAVROMMATIS said that the working paper and the discussion which had taken place at the meeting would serve as an excellent basis for preparing the contribution which the Committee would submit to the Conference, provided it was authorized to do so. What mattered most, therefore, was to make sure that it would be invited to participate in the Conference. The Committee might prepare a very short document of less than a page taking up point by point each aspect of the Preparatory Committee's mandate as defined by the General Assembly in paragraph 3 of its resolution 45/155. Thus, with regard to participation in the Conference, the Committee would indicate that the treaty bodies should be represented at the Conference - as their participation was not yet certain. Regarding the agenda, the Committee might indicate that it should be drawn up in such a way as to permit the discussion of certain items - and there it could list, say, four items it considered to be of particular interest. With regard to documentation for the Conference, the Committee could stress that the treaty bodies should be encouraged to submit papers, a recommendation which, once adopted, would enable the Committee to submit a document based on the working paper now before it. The Chairman of the Committee could present such an outline to the Preparatory Committee. At a later stage, if the Third Committee of the General Assembly adopted the Preparatory Committee's recommendations, the Human Rights Committee could examine the substance of its possible contribution to the Conference.

60. The CHAIRMAN requested the Working Group, and any Committee member wishing to participate, to draft a short paper listing the questions to be submitted to the Preparatory Committee. Depending on the latter's recommendations to the General Assembly, the Human Rights Committee might be able to consider at its autumn session the text it would be asked to submit as a contribution to the Conference. Of course, the Committee first of all had to obtain an assurance that it would be invited to participate in the Conference, since the General Assembly resolution referred only to its participation in the preparatory activities.

61. In the absence of any objection, he would take it that the Committee approved that course of action.

62. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.